

burdened student needs when struggling with a top-heavy curriculum. The familiarity with the subject matter provided by a working forensic pathologist shows through the writing, displaying the healthy scepticism needed when discussing controversial matters such as suffocation, cot death and aspiration of vomit. The vast subject of toxicology has to be squeezed into a few pages, but again the best use is made of these, with tables of common drugs, their effects and toxic concentrations. Drugs of abuse get deserved prominence, not unnaturally from a pathologist who probably sees more on his central London 'patch' than anyone else in the country.

In summary, though this type of book has a number of competitors, albeit usually rather larger, it provides the most concentrated dose of legal medicine available, in a palatable form. With the sad decline in undergraduate teaching in the legal aspects of medicine in this country, the more that accessible and economical written sources become available, the better. The publisher's blurb suggests that it might also be of use to police and probation officers and this may well be true, though medical students will obviously remain the prime target.

PROFESSOR BERNARD KNIGHT,
*Wales Institute of Forensic Medicine,
Royal Infirmary, Cardiff CF2 1SZ*

Logos – Manufactured Motherhood; The Ethics of the New Reproductive Techniques

William J Prior, 213 pages, Santa Clara California, US\$11.00, Santa Clara University, 1988

Logos (Vol 9 1988) derives from papers presented at a philosophical conference on Manufactured Motherhood held in the Philosophy Department at Santa Clara University in the Spring of 1988.

Not surprisingly, papers at the conference centred on the topic of surrogacy, since, at the time, the famous decision of Judge Harvey Sorkow in the Baby M surrogate motherhood case was prominent in the headlines.

Many ethical (and legal) issues

surrounding the practice of surrogacy are discussed and although a preponderance of the arguments are (by now) well-rehearsed, some contributors present the issues from a new (and sometimes controversial) perspective. In particular, Herbert T Krimmel (*Surrogate Mother Arrangements from the Perspective of the Child*, p 97) argues that surrogacy is harmful morally to the children thereby created since they may be regarded as mere 'commodities' rather than as of value in themselves. Whilst, no doubt, many would take issue with this view, it has the advantage of highlighting the interests of the children, which tend to become obscured in an over-concentration on the conflicting rights of the parties to the transaction.

As an example of this; June Carbone (*The Limits of Contract in Family Law: An Analysis of Surrogate Motherhood* p 147) considers the legality and effectiveness of the surrogacy contract. She argues that such contracts are consistent with the interests of the contracting adults and the welfare of the child and contends that it is important that the law takes a declared stance on whether such contracts are to be treated as enforceable or not, since uncertainty as to the validity of the contract is detrimental to all concerned. Whilst at first sight such an argument is persuasive and certainty in the law is to be applauded, on consideration, it is difficult to see how a rigid declaration that such contracts are enforceable can really benefit the child. Only if disputed contracts are dealt with on a 'case by case' basis can the individual child's welfare be given full consideration. A blanket decision on enforceability would not achieve this desired result.

In England the position is more straightforward: commercial surrogacy arrangements were outlawed by The Surrogacy Arrangements Act in 1985 and only private non-commercial arrangements may now exist. Even so, such contracts are unenforceable and void as contrary to the common law and The Children Act 1975. Thus, in all reported cases of such disputes the English courts have followed the wishes of the surrogate mother, whether this has been to retain the child or to comply with the arrangement (provided that the party concerned can demonstrate an ability to provide adequate care for the child).

The volume, then, is recommended for the new perspectives that it brings to issues which remain as controversial as ever. However, caution is urged, in that some of the concerns expressed about

current practices are inapplicable to our own situation.

ZELDA PICKUP,
*Department of General Practice,
University of Liverpool*

Abortion, Doctors and the Law: Some Aspects of the Legal Regulation of Abortion in England from 1803 to 1982

John Keown, 212 pages, Cambridge, £27.50, Cambridge University Press, 1988

Traditionally, abortion is regarded as an area where the law has been influenced heavily by considerations of ethics. Contemporary debates on the restriction of the time limit for abortion and the new RU486 abortion pill feature the same, rather tired, arguments concerning the sanctity of fetal life versus a woman's right to choose. Keown's copiously researched work invites us to look a little deeper at the evolution of law and policy on abortion, and specifically invites us to pay slightly more attention to the sociology of the medical profession than to ethics.

Keown analyses the development of the law on abortion from Lord Ellenborough's Act of 1803 up to and beyond the Abortion Act 1967, paying particular attention to the role of the medical profession in this evolution. The principal thesis of the work is conveniently summarised in the last chapter: throughout the history of abortion legislation the medical profession has exerted an important influence on the determination of when abortion is deemed 'criminal' and when 'therapeutic'. This has two aspects. Firstly, on a political level, the profession supported legislation from 1803 to 1861 (which helped establish its professional status) and in 1967 (which furthered its professional interests). Secondly, on a practical level, the practitioner exercises extensive autonomy in deciding whether a given abortion is therapeutic. On the first point, Keown makes some fascinating observations on how a legal prohibition of abortion, first unambiguously found in the Act of 1803, promoted the cohesion of the professional group of surgeon-apothecaries, the original